It's a magical place, we're on our way there...

Is the stress of modern life wearing you down? Ever feel like throwing your towel in the ring and running away to another planet entirely? Just packing a backpack and hopping in your spaceship bound for Destination Anywhere (except here)? Me too, only it's not that easy... unless you happen to be part of the stunted, furry Blotian alien race from the planet Blot. It's alright for them, *they* have somewhere else to travel *to*. As for *us* poor schmucks, *we're* lumbered with the only known habitable planet in the solar system. You know, *Earth*, and we've done that to death already. Personally I'm sick of it.

Then again, is a change of scenery really worth being Jack Bauered to death for? Did that guy endure some grisly torture or what? With hindsight, the 'Creatures' in question would likely have stayed put and made the best of their stupid names, boring diets and general station in life.

They wouldn't have jettisoned off in their DIY escape pod headed for Earth, craving glamour and excitement. Likewise, they wouldn't have crash-landed in the Pacific Ocean having collided with a wayward asteroid. Nor would they have colonised a tropical island paradise, or renamed it the 'Hippest Place in the Known Universe', and themselves the 'Fuzzy Wuzzies'.

If only they'd been satisfied with their tedious, futile existence, neither would they have been invited to a disco shindig by the degenerate demons who live on the other side of their new seemingly deserted abode. So too, safe at home methodically chalking off the days left on their death clocks, they wouldn't have been bamboozled into becoming the demon's captive playthings to be used and abused for their own unique brand of twisted amusement. Admirably inventive as it is.

Ah, woulda-shoulda-coulda. Whatcha gonna do? What's done is done, and there's no point crying over split blood, and fluffy mutilated guts. Luckily for the Blotians, Fuzzy Wuzzies or whatever they're calling themselves this week, one of their party animal posse couldn't handle his booze so serendipitously evaded the demon's nets while he was preoccupied throwing up in the bushes. See kids, excessive alcohol consumption is good for your health after all.

No doubt after recovering from a monumental hangover, he's none too chuffed to learn of his compatriots' grim plight, and thus vows to avenge the miscarriage of justice. I expect too this involved a degree of lip-curling, grimacing and staring obstinately into the distance... wearing a red sweatband. As you do.

With your assistance he may even manage to save some of them before they can be sliced, diced, minced, flame-grilled, electrocuted, sawn in half, chainsaw massacred, or otherwise

maimed. Had this been The Addams Family they'd be in seventh heaven! Ungrateful little runts.

Creatures - an acronym for Clyde Radcliffe Exterminates All The Unfriendly Repulsive Earth-ridden Slime - was originally coded by Apex Computer Productions and published by Thalamus for the Commodore 64 in *1991*. To no less than rapturous acclaim, I should add, despite being rushed to the finish line (almost) in time for the manic Christmas splurgeathon in 1990, and the developers themselves pulling five successive all-nighters at the cassette/disk duplication plant, Ablex in Telford. As confirmed by Andy Roberts on The Retro Hour podcast (episode 83), so that's the release date mystery cleared up.

*"Also found out about a series of 'monster movies' on Channel 4. They run at about 11.00pm each Friday and I'll give you three guesses at the title of the series... That's right - The Creature Feature." - **John Rowlands***

Creatures was certainly worth the torment. It received impeccable scores across the board; from 90% - 96% amongst the English speaking press. Commodore Format among the gobsmacked critics awarded Creatures 94%, slotting it firmly into their 'A to Z of Classic Games' treatise in January 1991.

Zzap! - who accorded the highest accolade of all - must have known it inside out and backwards by that stage given the exhaustive seven-part coverage dedicated to the title over a six month period through their 'diary of a game' development story serial. A potentially nepotistic caveat that may have proved controversial had the competition not agreed unanimously that Creatures truly deserved the plaudits lavished upon it, not least a 'Gold Medal' from Zzap! themselves.

You'll find this article liberally confettied with development anecdotes and tidbits courtesy of the Rowlands brothers. If not otherwise specified you can assume they were plucked straight from Zzap's excellent, insightful editorial, which I should note is also available online in its entirety thanks to Game Stone.

For anyone who remained unconvinced by their florid endorsement, Commodore Format went on to peg it at no. 3 in their 'All-Time Top 50 C64 Games' countdown in November 1994, as well as their 'Top Ten C64 Games of all Time' assessment in October 1995.

If this seems a bit late in the day for the creaky old Commie it's because the curtain-drawing article was published in CF's 61st and final issue, the crew having really hung up their typewriters back in December 1993. Of course still an impressive run for a magazine centred around a breadbox released in 1982, even though it *had* been whittled down to 24 pages written by a sole author by that stage.

Creatures was the brainchild of brothers John and Steve Rowlands who together founded Apex Computers in 1988. Cyberdyne Warrior would be their inaugural release, championed by Hewson in 1989. Zzap!64 gave it the nod of approval in issue 59, winding up their enthusiastic reckoning with a 90% grade. Apex were far from prolific, unapologetically prioritising quality over quantity; three of the leading four 'All-Time Top 50 C64 Games' were theirs! (Commodore Format, November 1994).

As for what came next for Apex, in John Rowlands' own words, speaking in March 2003...

"In the mid 90's we designed and developed an arcade game for Atari. Just before we completed it Midway axed all external games under development at Atari, including ours *shakes head*...

Then in 2000 we developed IK2000 (GBC) with Rob Levy (top bloke).

We continued working with Rob Levy again on *deep breath* Road Champs BXS Stunt Biking (GBC)... and no, we didn't come up with the name, just the game... this was closely followed by Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX (GBC).

Then in 2001 Rob 'Retrograde' Ellis joined us and we developed the GBA version of Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX. In 2002 we developed its sequel.

Rapidly tiring of BMX games, we spent the second half of 2002 designing an original next-gen game. This is what we're developing now, but I can't say any more on this *knowing nod*..."

For any C64 aficionados reading, it goes without saying that Apex were also the team behind the legendary Mayhem in Monsterland. The only game Commodore Format ever bestowed with an unprecedented 100% score, pondering "The best you'll ever see on the C64 in this decade or the next?", answering their own question with "Yes. Point made. Enough said." in the same breath.

"So you may well be wondering how we can justify that big 100% rating; after all, nothing is ever perfect. Are we saying that Mayhem is without a blemish on his rosey face? Maybe not. What we are saying is that this is as good as you can realistically expect it to get. The perfect game? No."

Commodore Format (November 1993)

While it was partly a stunt in honour of their final(ish) edition, Commodore Force weren't far behind with their 97% bottom line, published in the same month.

"I'm about five hundred words into this review, and I feel as if I've hardly scratched the surface of what Mayhem has to offer. It's well-presented, playable to extremes, great to look at and listen to - I really can't fault it.

There's even countless amounts of hidden extras (including elusive continues) to search out and claim; completing it wouldn't be seeing all it has to offer. It's utterly frustrating in places, consistently difficult and possibly the most challenging platform game I've ever encountered. Buy it."

Apex's talented development studio evolved into Digital Graffiti in 1999 and still exists today as Infinite Lives Ltd, specialising in games designed for mobile devices and the web.

In 2004 they released a follow up to Mayhem entitled Mayhem's Magic Dust for the Blackberry and J2ME platforms. Such was the level of affection still felt for the yellow triceratops, the original was released for the Nintendo Wii's Virtual Console in October 2008. Hammering home the point, a year later the 15th-anniversary edition was released on retro media (cassette and disk) by Psytronik Software.
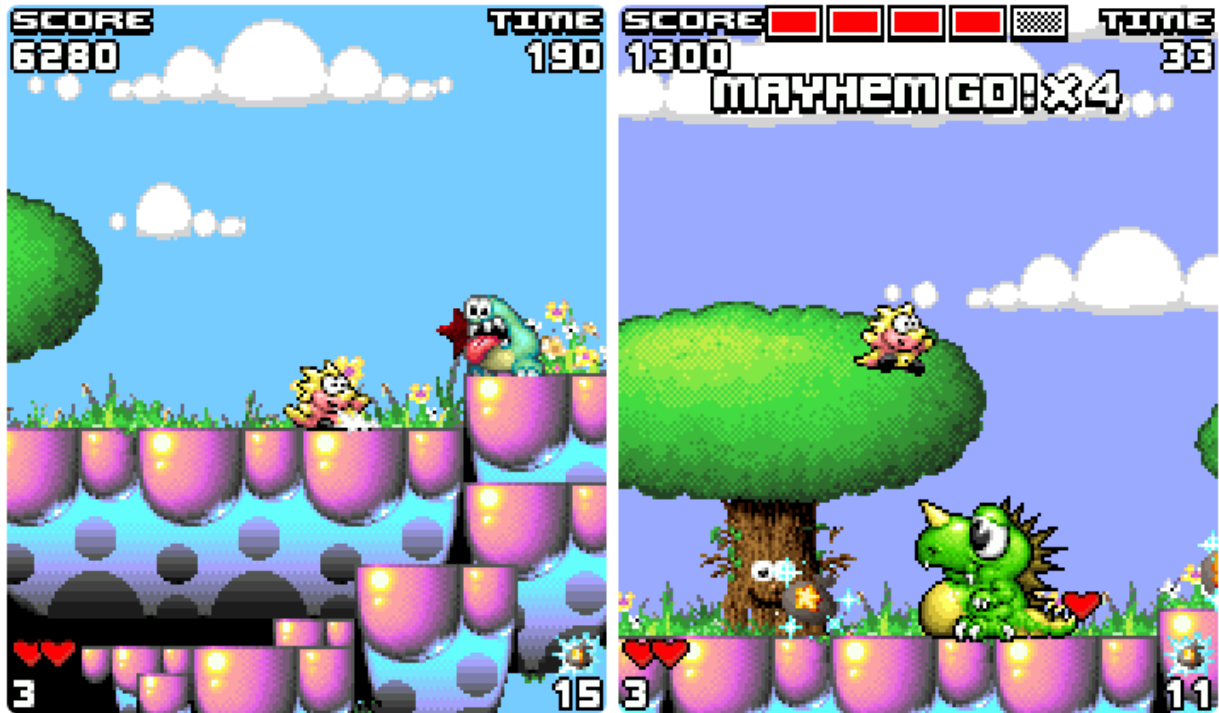
Creatures was such a prodigious hit on the C64, Thalamus felt it only appropriate to port it to the Amiga posthaste. That was the plan in 1990, only as fate - or blind bad luck - would have it, it wouldn't materialise for another three years courtesy of an entirely different developer.

Double Dragon I/II and Shinobi developers, Creative Materials (formerly Binary Design, and Terminal Software before that) who mostly produced games for U.S. Gold - including Street Fighter II, ESWAT and Final Fight - were the chosen ones. Yet it was WJS Design - most notably the team behind Anarchy published by Psyclapse (Psygnosis) - who ultimately delivered the goods.

"Creative Materials - the guys doing the Amiga and ST conversions of Creatures - now needed all the game characters, sprites, alien movement patterns and level maps. A day later after trying to save this lot to disk for them and realising it would take forever, we came up with an easy way to do it. We would just let Clyde walk

Your objective kind of goes without saying, once you expand the acronym that forms the title. Achieving it entails trundling around six imaginatively themed levels encompassing meadows, caverns, spooky, foreboding forests and graveyards, a castle and, ultimately, dungeons where you'll find your Fuzzy cohorts strung up, incarcerated in chains dangling from the walls. A divinely macabre touch I thought.

Helpfully, before you begin you're treated to an overview of each level's topography. Clyde progresses by travelling from left to right until stumbling across a shop, bossy guardian entity, or one of the three self-contained, single-screen torture chamber sequences. Therein you must rescue one of the Fuzzies from certain death at the hands of the sadist demonic villains by solving a series of intertwined puzzles. They remind me of Tomy's Screwball Scramble brain-teasing mechanical toy in that regard.

These were bolted on as an afterthought when it was deemed necessary to add a degree of nuance to an already overcrowded genre. Inspired by The Hooded Claw's incessant persecution of the heiress in Hanna-Barbera's 'The Perils of Penelope Pitstop' cartoon, these promptly became a crowd-pleasing favourite for the gaming public who found themselves absorbed by the kooky dichotomy between cute and barbaric violence. Thanks go to tipster, journalist and games designer, Andy Roberts, for that trivia tidbit (check out Retro Domination podcast 106).

In the first torture scenario, you must clear a path to the chief demon who's in the process of cranking up your mate Chippy to a height where his wicked comrade can dismember the poor mite with a chainsaw. You rescue him by triggering a series of events that lead to the cranky demon's demise, thereby putting the kibosh on his malicious scheme, and earning some precious MPCs in the process. You know, pocket money for the gift shop. Make the most of it shopaholics, there's no retail therapy to be found in the sequel.

First, light the cannon's fuse and ascend up the level. Kill the grub-laying caterpillar to grant access to the boulder on the edge of the upper platform. Nudge the boulder onto the seesaw to cause the cannonball perched on one end to launch into the air, crashing through the top platform to land in the cannon. This automatically fires into the demon to send him to the hot place. And voila!

Torturous interlude two entails spilling noxious liquid on the inhabitants to bring about quirky behavioural reactions that culminate in saving Chaz.

Knocking over the first beaker (containing turquoise liquid) causes one critter to hoist you up to the top of the level on a hand-pulley lift menagerie. Drowning the beavery type creatures in yellow ooze results in them gnawing through a rope holding aloft a set of heavy weights over a bug of some sort, brought to life via the magic of self-modifying code, John says. This guy's diligently peddling a cycle connected to an Acme sawmill. As he drives its belt mechanism, Chaz, tied to the conveyor is drawn ever closer to the gyrating blade of a circular saw. Failing to cut off the source of its power, sooner rather than later - I suspect - *could* be bad for his ebbing health.

Seeing as you start the liberation op standing right next to the bug bully pulling the strings it might have been easier simply to kick him off the bike, but then where's the absurdity in that?

WELL DONE

CLYDE HAS SAVED CHAZ FROM
BEING SLICED IN TWO

CHAZ OFFERS CLYDE HIS COLLECTION
OF MAGIC POTION CREATURES AS REWARD

WITHOUT HESITATION CLYDE ACCEPTS THEM
THEN CONTINUES ON HIS QUEST

Chuck is the Fuzzy in peril at the centre of torture episode three. Here the goal is to prevent an alien green spud on legs

from pushing your pal into the path of a blazing machine gun. To do this you must dispatch a blue egghead to clear the way towards a duo of blue eggheads. With these neutered, a cannonball drops out of the sky as if by magic. If you rock this back and two between the ramps hemming it in, you can generate sufficient momentum to edge it over the ridge of the trough.

Rolling towards the instigator of doom it knocks over a beaker of green slime dissolving him into a plume of smouldering smoke. With the puppeteer of pain no longer able to pull the strings, the Acme ram he's operating cuts out, allowing Chuck to stroll off into the sunset destined for a life of peace, tranquillity... and wild Acid house merriment I expect.

"How about a Fuzzy tied to a wall, with a very large speaker in front of him, connected to a very powerful amplifier, connected to a record player which is playing

Subsequent to these oddball encounters, the bosses and ordinary foes are somewhat of an anti-climax, making the bulk of the game padding out the juicy bits seem more of a chore than it might otherwise in an orthodox platformer.

Cute as you are (partially due to the influence of the Rowlands playing arcade games of that ilk, including New Zealand Story, Mr Wardner, and Galaga '88, for research purposes), you can't exterminate your adversaries simply by looking adorable and fluttering your eyelashes. Novel though that would be. This being the case, it's handy that you're endowed with halitosis fire breath and 'Droopy' bullets, inspired by R-Type and Wardner respectively.

Your flamethrower weapon is activated by holding down and releasing the fire button, whilst bullets - your principal weapon - are discharged by tapping it, and can be upgraded to project eight types of 'Droopy' bullets. These aren't scooped up from the bountiful soil as is traditional, rather purchased along with baddie-bashing/puzzle-solving tips from an end of stage pop-up shop run by a "foul, ugly, grotesque witch", to quote Steve. In case you're perplexed, given the screenshot dissonance, she morphed into a "36-24-36 centrefold (unfortunately clothed)" prior to release.

with the idea of being able to buy additional info if you want it." - **John Rowlands**

Money is of no interest to her; three varieties of 'magic potion creatures' rounded up on route are the defacto currency here so you'll need to make sure you snag plenty before darkening her door, lest you amble away empty-pawed. She takes care of the rest by brewing the living 'ingredients' to form weapon upgrade potions.

Entering her parlour she asks suggestively, "I hope there's something here that takes your fancy". Ooh err missus! I think she's coming onto me. That or I've been watching too many Benny Hill episodes.

On offer are fall up shots that bend upwards to reach enemies on higher platforms, the super droopy which accomplishes the exact opposite, fireballs, the wiggler, scatterball, flamer, and curly wurly, but no melons of any kind. My apologies if you were expecting something saucier. There's no time for those kind of shenanigans when your kith and kin are squealing out in terror, inches from expiry.

And anyway, you'll need all the weapons you can lay your grubby paws on to fend off the fire-bombing hot-air-ballooning crocodiles (?), sunshaded bats, flying turnips, organic ED-209s, jellyfish, alien spuds, spitting stone-carved heads, gargantuan maggots, mutant cats, and so on, swapping between them at will via a menu accessed by pulling down on the joystick. Absorb just two hits and you're a gonna so you'll want to avoid all those treacherous traps too. Three lives won't last forever.

"Still on the sprite side of things, we now decided it was time to give Clyde his death routine. This will be hard as

we are running out of memory so the less sprites it is the better. The best idea was that when Clyde touches an alien he squirms a bit and shouts out some sort of death word. These will change depending on how he dies." - **Steve Rowlands**

"As Steve said he's going to squirm as he dies. The problem is that if he dies above ground (e.g. if he's jumping), you get him frantically waving his arms and legs around in mid-air, which doesn't look too hot.

I've played countless games (including arcade games) which kill the player by animating him 'collapsing to the ground' whether he's actually on the ground or not. Now, this seems pretty stupid to me, so I've added a little detection routine which will make Clyde fall to the ground as he dies.

I also had to check the surrounding terrain when Clyde dies, so if he's in water he has to say 'GULP'. He has to say 'AAAAH' and 'OUCH' normally, so instead of toggling the speech bubbles (as I initially did) I made it random. Steve wanted to put in four different bubbles, but as I'm quickly running out of memory I had to cut it down to two. Sorry." - **John Rowlands**

You'll soon come to learn that like Mogwai, Fuzzies and water don't mix. To cross any rivers or surf down waterfalls you encounter you'll need to hitch a ride on a motorised lily pad or use limited capacity SCUBA gear to dive below the surface. Armbands or a boat were initially considered as possible means of transport for these sections, though dropped in favour of the frog's favourite organic lilo. Good call.

"...this has now changed, as the idea wasn't properly thought out (as usual) and consequently we ran into an incurable problem. So after spending all the time designing the animations of Clyde doing the front crawl (which did look really good with some neat slashing water animations), I had to change the control mode. It's now been decided that Clyde will stand on some lilies that float on the surface of the water, then pull out his 'Acme Compact Electric Fan' and be blown along." - **Steve Rowlands**

Contact with the wet stuff spells instant death rather than duplication as in Gremlins, although that could have been a fun nuance. Even the sentient droplets that emerge from the wetlands are enough to send you to an early watery grave. Still, it's some consolation that while you're having the stuffing washed out of you, you get to gawp at the vista of the celestially animated undulating waves.

"We came up with the idea of making the waterfall roar yesterday. When I say roar I don't mean a 'ROAR with clenched teeth', I mean a quiet roar of 'water cascading down rocks' sort of thing. As Clyde gets closer to the fall the roar will get louder, and as he passes it'll get quieter. This will only happen if the player (you) decide not to have music playing for that part of the level." - **John Rowlands**

Touching these makeshift boats renders you incapable of shooting your weapon in both the C64 and Amiga incarnations of Creatures, so you must first jump clear, shoot the varmints and hopefully land back on board to continue your journey. This wasn't so much a conscious design choice, rather an unfortunate byproduct of the hardware's limitations, as John Rowlands explained to Retro Gamer for their 'The Making of: Creatures' article (issue 24).

> "The sprites normally used for Clyde's firepower were used for the alternate transport. This meant that when his control method changed, he didn't have access to his weapons."

A bonus intermission stage was to feature an additional mode of transport - a sports car - though that section was axed entirely because the Rowlands thought the gameplay mechanics were proving to be poor, and of course, there was no time to spare to resuscitate it. Perhaps Clyde's dalliance with skiing, as bandied about in the Zzap development diary, met the same fate.

> "Wednesday's post contained a demo disk from Andy Roberts. It also had some of his bitmap screens on, with our favourite apparently taking the least time to copy - sorry - create! (Now where have I seen that Lamborghini before?)" - **John Rowlands**

In the revisited Zzap 'diary of a game' series leading up to the release of Creature 2, Steve demonstrates the importance of never letting unused assets go to waste. Ish.

> "The characters are now finished for the Intermission Screen so next are the sprites. I've put Clyde in a sports car but there is one drawback, it uses up seven sprites out of a possible eight. I tried another way with three expanded vertical sprites but this looked too chunky so that was scrapped."

A further Achilles heel - fixed in the sequel I should point out - that made the transition to the Amiga game is your inability to walk up ramps. Instead, you're obliged to shimmy up them one jump at a time (or cadge a ride on a broomstick!). Perhaps the explanation for this is a matter of aiming to recreate the original source as accurately as possible to preserve its legacy.

Even so, the Amiga revamp features enhanced copper list graphics, more intricate animation, different - though not necessarily improved - audio, and even an A3 poster! Folded for logistical reasons of course. Always a shame that.

Analogously to the C64 game, you can only scroll the screen left to right, so you're out of luck if you need to backtrack, and there are no level warping passwords. This was more of a design preference than an oversight, as Steve explains...

"Many a person has said to us that Creatures should have had passwords, and are suggesting putting them in Creatures II. We've been thinking about this and have concluded that there is a major problem. Two months after a game comes out you can find pages and pages of passwords printed in magazines enabling you to jump to any level of the game. Hardly fair now, is it?

So John and I have tried to come up with a way to make each copy of the game have its very own table of passwords. We have successfully done this but it involves

a slight problem. You would have to save to tape the very first time you play the game (disk owners wouldn't even know if we made a quick save to disk). This means we would need leaderless and un-notched cassettes, not really much of a problem, but there is a chance that someone might record over the actual game data by mistake. So, all in all, we're going to forget about the password idea."

More importantly, where's my free Fuzzy weepul souvenir? C64 gamers got one!

"We came up with the idea of giving away bugs with the game (not the computer sort) which look like Clyde (Newsfield had them a couple of years ago at the PCW show). The bugs may even be given away at this year's computer show." - **Steve Rowlands**

"Wot a show! So what if we're absolutely knackered? - it was fun. We saw the 'Creatures Bugs' for the first time (the cute furry bugs that we suggested could be used to promote the game) and spent half the time going through the boxes looking for the best colour schemes. The bugs went down well with everybody - when we started throwing them into the crowd they went mad, and at one stage were quite literally ripping the stand down for them!" - **Steve**, quite possibly exaggerating a tad for comic effect I sense

"The next idea was to put the Creatures bugs in the boxes of Clyde Radcliffe In Torture Trouble but also put in an authentic adoption certificate with a ribbon tied around it." - **Steve**, proving that like cows, good marketing gimmicks can be milked to the final moo

Creatures' USP, the aspect that caught the attention of critics and gamers alike, is the bizarre mix of cutesy, endearing

sprites and unabashed torture. Once you've got over the novelty of that, it's all a bit pedestrian by Amiga standards sadly.

The original is a wonder to behold given the platform's technical impediments. Its unique palette alone makes Creatures a visually arresting experience thanks to the implementation of colour-swapping techniques that give the illusion of engaging more tones than the C64 is capable of displaying.

"Adjusted the in-game colour splits today. Instead of indiscriminately splitting all colours, they now only split colours which are different. On the subject of colours, I decided to do something about the lack of effective sprite colours we can use. At the moment we can normally only use five or six, the sprite multicolours being dark grey and yellow. I managed to get an extra seven or eight 'good looking' ones today (by mixing two

Already a paragon of flair and creativity, Creatures parades a funkily sublime, dynamic soundtrack inspired by the house/dance music the Rowlands were clubbing to at the time, silky-smooth multi-layered parallax scrolling, individual level intro and outro animations, and a cavalcade of gloriously eccentric boss battles, some of which revel in defying description.

"Rob Ellis has recommended that we hear Jean Michel Jarre's new album - Waiting For Cousteau, so on it goes as we work away. This music is perfect for working to, really relaxing and mellow. Some of the tunes are quite cute in a way, and I may be inspired by them (copyright - what's that?) One of the best tracks is 22 mins long - imagine that for title music!" - **Steve Rowlands**

...and not least, something we were all grateful for: no monstrous, hulking HUD bloat!

"On the subject of status areas (warning: serious moaning about to follow), if there's one thing I hate it's games which have teeny-weeny little playing areas and absolutely MASSIVE status panels. You know what I mean? They usually display the name of the game in some fancy logo, don't they? I'm so glad they do that. Quite often I'll be playing a game when all of a sudden I'll forget what it's called - better look at the ol' status panel - oh, I remember now!" - **John** and I clearly sing from the same hymn sheet.

Following a protracted three year wait, the Amiga port isn't exactly a titanic improvement over the C64 original, and somehow actually manages to run more slowly without building upon the mechanics or scope of the game. Apex - it should be noted - would like to stress that they had no involvement with its production. That said, the graphics *are* gorgeous, charming and bursting with all the charisma and captivating wit of its forbear.

It strikes me that what gamers - many of whom would have made the monolithic transition from the C64 to the Amiga during those three years of 16-bit Clydelessness - were expecting was something commensurate to a sequel, rather than a pixel for pixel *port*. The latter being essentially what they got.

Everything from the opening title screen with the colossal Creatures insignia crushing the beavers as it plummets from the sky and dancing Fuzzies at the periphery of the high score table, to the closing vignette animation were painstakingly revamped for a more demanding audience. Level layouts, assailant design, torture puzzles, interstitial screens are all present and dialled up to 11. Forgettable music, drowned out by overly imposing sound effects is its only real *down*grade.

CREATURES
TODAYS TOP HEROS

1. 3000 APEX
2. 2800 JAZ
3. 2600 STOD
4. 2400 ANDY
5. 2200 DAVE
6. 2000 ATFR
7. 1800 MTB
8. 1600 ZZAP

LILLY LAKES LEADING TO
THE CAVES OF SLIME
GET READY
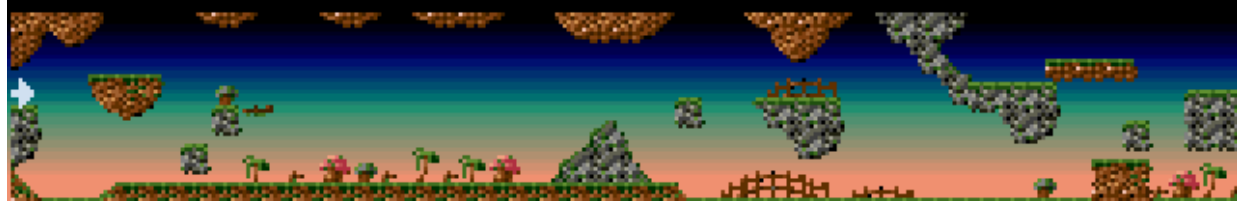
COLLECT THE FOLLOWING CREATURES
FOR MAGIC POTIONS

Nonetheless, this wasn't enough to swing the balance with the critics who rooted 16-bit Creatures firmly in the mediocre platformer camp, with the exception of Amiga Action, who leaf-surfed against the tide to sing its praises.

"...fairly frustrating in a put-it-away-never-to-play-again kind of way ...Wait a few months and it'll be on budget."

58% - CU Amiga (July 1993)

"For all its annoying faults, Creatures still hangs together enough to give a platform addict a few hours of enjoyment, but it's only got six levels and three puzzle screens, so don't expect it to last forever. Unless you're dying for another platform fix, there's not much in Creatures for you.

It's only an adequate conversion of the C64 game, and seems to have slowed down and lost some indefinable 'umph!' in the process. And even if you do like it, there's not enough in the game (variety or size) to keep you playing for very long."

63% - Amiga Format (April 1993)

"You want a tin lid for it all? How about annoying sound - average music, drowned out by staggeringly loud effects (which you can switch off if you like, but that's not exactly the point, is it?), and interminable disk accessing? This ruined my day, I can tell you."

20% - Amiga Power (April 1993)

"Graphically it's impressive, with a style all of its own, the music's adequate, even if it does begin to grate after a while, and the torture screens are a welcome plus, but more of these would have been appreciated - are three non-scrolling screens, each revolving around a simple puzzle, really enough to shout about as a major feature in a full-price game? Creatures may have cut the mustard on the Commodore 64, but I'm afraid that in 1993, Amiga owners expect a little more return on their £26 investment than this. Perfect budget fodder."

69% - The One (March 1993)

"Creatures is a superb platformer that should appeal to anyone without latent train-spotting tendencies or a frontal lobotomy. It avoids falling into the Zool/Sonic/Mario trap whilst adding some very neat characteristics of its own. This won't be the sensation on the Amiga that it was on the 64, but this is only because

the original was so brilliant it took us all by storm. I have yet to see a game that sets out to do what Creatures does, and do it so well".

85% - Amiga Action (March 1993)

Our hero's journey wraps up once he's emancipated the final surviving Fuzzy. To celebrate he organises a rave, inviting the whole tribe, and they party hard way into the wee hours while Clyde has some catching up to do with the missus. If you know what I mean *nudge, wink, nudge*. As the sequel opens with an introduction to the couple's sizeable new brood, I don't think it's a case for Mulder and Scully by any stretch of the imagination.

Although somewhat frustrating due to the pixel-perfect jumps required and quirky controls, it's not the toughest or longest challenge you'll ever face. Any semblance of

excessive toil is further ameliorated by the generous allocation of restart points; you can thank (the dearth of them in) Ghouls 'n' Ghosts for that.

These factors taken together, at the time of release brought into question Creatures' value for money; it was likened by several critics to a budget game with a premium rate price tag. £25 as opposed to £10 (cassette) or £15 (disk) for the C64 precursor.

Clyde had a cameo in Winter Camp in 1992, and in the same year our Fuzzy pals made a comeback on the Commodore 64 under the guise of 'Creatures 2: Torture Trouble'. The eagerly awaited sequel focuses on the aspect of the first game that set it apart (the torture scenes), while the platforming segments were relegated to mere sub-game sized diversions. Despite once again being praised to the hilt, no Amiga conversion materialised.

> "The structure for Creatures II will not be entirely different from Creatures as it will have a Torture Screen on every level. Between the Torture Screen there will be an Intermission Screen, which I am working on at the moment. The idea is that Clyde has to chase a cute little creature along a road avoiding rocks 'n' stuff, and when he catches up with him he shakes him around until he offers Clyde loads of goodies. This is planned to be in brilliant parallax-o-vision, the characters are nearly done but John's still too busy to do the scrolling so I will have to wait to see the finished effect." - **Steve Rowlands**

Thalamus folded the following year thanks to the liquidation of their parent company, Newsfield Publications Ltd (who counted Crash and Zzap!64 amongst their portfolio), though not before publishing what would be their swan song, Nobby the Aardvark for the C64. Many of the rights to their IPs were pounced on by Eidos Interactive, for who knows what reason? They don't appear to have done much with them.

Now in 2017 with a successful Indiegogo campaign already under their belts Thalamus are set to make a welcome return, and possibly-maybe-eventually deliver the long-awaited sequel to Creatures. Once they've finished remastering

Hunter's Moon that is. It has yet to be disclosed if Creatures 3 will feature cinematic quality, Saw-style 'solve or die' torture puzzles.